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THE

Old and New Testament Student

VOL. IX.

NOVEMBER, 1889.

No. 5

IN the present number of THE STUDENT our readers will find the full prospectus of an organization destined, we believe, in the providence of God, to exert a strong influence upon the study of the Bible. For many years circumstances have been shaping themselves in this direction. The history of the "Correspondence School of Hebrew," of the "Summer Schools of Hebrew," and of the journals which have been so closely connected with these schools, is in some respects a remarkable example of what might really be called "blind" working. The single purpose from the beginning has been to assist toward a more intelligent and a more accurate knowledge of the Bible. The purpose has always been a clear and definite one, although the pathway, at times, has been very dark.

The first period (1881-1884) was a continual struggle; the interest in the work proposed was very slight; the plan was novel and regarded with suspicion; friends were few and scattered; the money needed for the work could not be obtained. But for the constant encouragement of President George W. Northrup, of the Chicago Baptist Union Theological Seminary, the financial aid rendered by Benjamin Douglass, Esq., of Chicago, and the wise assistance in many forms furnished by the Rev. George S. Goodspeed, now of New Haven, the undertaking would have failed miserably. Other names, which stand in close relation with the work of this first period are those of Charles Rufus Brown, Sylvester Burnham, H. R. Clissold, C. Eugene Crandall, Frederic J. Gurney, Robert F. Harper, D. A. McClenahan, Ira M. Price, John A. Reichelt, and Samuel H. Lee. By the help of these and others the work was maintained and developed.

The second period (1885-1889), that just closing, has been one of steady growth. Thousands of dollars have been contributed toward the work by its generous friends. Hundreds of men have been guided in their Biblical studies, and thousands have been helped toward a broader and truer conception of the Sacred Word. So great, indeed, has been the interest aroused, that without, and really in opposition to, the desire of those most closely identified with it, the work has been gradually taking on a wider scope. The question has been asked, not once but a thousand times, why should these plans and methods be confined to the Hebrew? Why may they not be applied to the Greek New Testament, and even to the Bible in English? And while these questions have been coming from every quarter, from England, Japan, India, China, Australia, as well as from every corner of our own land, the work itself, almost unconsciously, has been adapting itself to the new fields of study proposed.

The third period, has now (October, 1889) begun. The beginning is attended with everything that could encourage. Leading scholars, men whose names are known wherever the Bible is studied, men who occupy the highest positions in intellectual and religious circles, men who are identified with the greatest and best institutions of the country,—such men, because of their conviction that work of the kind proposed is imperatively demanded in this, a time of peculiar significance, in spite of the multitude of obligations already resting upon them, assume the responsibility of the work.

The prospectus exhibits a purpose and plan, the magnitude of which will be appreciated only by those who examine it in detail. (1) A Correspondence School Department in which are offered six series, each of seven courses, covering the most important subjects in every field of Biblical study, adapted to the needs of students of every possible grade, an opportunity of which the whole world may avail itself; (2) a Summer School Department, so organized that local interest in a higher kind of Biblical work shall be aroused, and schools planted wherever there is a desire or demand for them; (3) a Special Course Department, so elastic in its organization as to adapt it to the wants of any organized society, whether Church, Sunday School, Young People's Society, Young Men's Christian Association, Academy or College; (4) an

Examination Department intended to supplement and aid (and in no sense, rival,) any kind of Bible study in which men, from the Sunday School up to the highest University training, engage.

Such, in a word, is the history and scope of this undertaking. What its future will be no one knows except the One to whose care and guidance it has been committed by those who have it in charge. That it may accomplish his Will, that it may serve his great and glorious cause, that it may be a power in the interest of truth, and that, when it has ceased to serve these ends, it may cease to exist, is their prayer.

THE charge is made that a critical study of the Scriptures leads too often to a mere multiplication of doubt, and to the unsettling of the grounds of religious faith. One is told that it is hard enough at the best to hold unswervingly to the true path, to clear the mind of skepticism, and to receive in child-like faith the *credenda* of revelation. To gratify an idle curiosity by digging beneath the foundations is only to undermine them. Suppose we grant that the immediate result of criticism is an increase of doubt, that traditional conceptions to which the heart clings as to cherished heirlooms are ruthlessly shaken or overturned, and that the destruction of familiar and venerable beliefs, even in making room for the larger and better, is always painful and distressing. Nevertheless is it not the universal law that the increase of knowledge works increase of sorrow, at least for the time being, or until it has become possible to readjust ourselves to the new aspect of truth? Intellectual progress begins in questioning, and questioning begets doubt. It is harmful only when it stops at the doubt. Outside the sphere of direct revelation it is unquestionable that every higher truth, or every enlarged conception of its relations, has been reached only by cutting a passage through opposing doubts to the sunlit heights beyond. It is the perpetual conflict with ignorance, error, and superstition; and conflict means suffering, but it means victory too. No man holds truth intelligently who holds it merely because he has been told to hold it in this form or that. A really intelligent grasp of truth, even of traditional truth, if we please, is possible to him only who has carefully examined

and tested it, who has resolutely battled his way past skepticism, and who, when challenged, can give a valid reason for the faith that is in him. Criticism does not undermine the foundations. In the end it serves to reveal their impregnable solidity and strength. The soul of man is so constituted that it craves the larger knowledge even at the cost of present pain.

To this question of the practical influence of criticism there is, however, another side which deserves most serious attention. An exclusively critical study of the Scriptures leads to spiritual barrenness. The life of the soul, even in the preacher, needs other nourishment than grammatico-historical interpretations, archeological discoveries, sacred geography, theological subtleties, or even ponderously argued orthodoxies. These are husks, useful, perhaps indispensable, in their place; but it should not be forgotten that the husk exists not for its own sake but for the sake of the kernel. The real nutriment of the spirit is found only in the inner body of truth, and this must be spiritually apprehended. The life of the Bible does not pulsate in a complex congeries of doctrines, it does not kindle in the eye of speculation, it does not glow in the withered and shrunken cheek of archeology, it does not stir with eloquence the dead tongue of comparative philology. Its mystic power must be experienced rather than handled, felt rather than studied. Moving with invisible fingers over the cords of life it evokes a sweet and solemn music that quiets the troubled spirit, and thrills the soul with a vivid sense of the nearness and power of the world to come. This power resides not wholly in the dogmatic affirmations of the Bible, in its legislation, or in its ethics, but more largely perhaps in its sublime poetry and consoling promises, in its prophetic anticipations and apocalyptic visions. Does not this explain why the unlettered negro in his plantation cabin, as well as humble believers everywhere, turn with a true instinct to these portions of Scripture, as travellers to the desert spring beneath the shade of Elim's palms? They find here a life that responds to their own innermost life, a divine inspiration that kindles enthusiasm, that consecrates to service, and that lifts the soul above the grind and grief of earth. Such transporting fore-

tastes of heavenly joys are not attained by microscopic study of daghesh fortes or Greek particles. And yet it is sadly true that this devotional study of the Bible, this vital contact with its spiritual essence, is that which the preacher is most prone to neglect. Too often in feeding others he starves himself. The homiletical tendency tyrannizes over his spiritual needs. He is like an Alpine guide whose anxiety for the weak and inexperienced under his charge hides from his own eyes the magnificent vistas on every side. The preacher spends his strength in breaking paths for others, and in watching against errors that, like treacherous crevasses, may engulf the unwary. He must keep himself informed as to hostile assaults upon the integrity and authority of the word, and must be acquainted with the methods and results of rationalistic criticism. He should, moreover, be a trained exegete. Just at this point the temptation arises to remain satisfied with interpretations, historical situations, arguments, analyses, and theories, with words and forms that are dead and useless except as they become tributary to a clearer apprehension of the living spiritual truth. The penalty and pain of knowledge are felt when, even in the midst of devotional reading of the Scriptures, critical conjectures and destructive theories obtrude themselves with dark and chilling force upon the mind. From all this it follows that the more absorbing the critical studies the more necessary it becomes to sit down every day in a humble and childlike spirit before the hallowing and inspiring Word. To neglect this is to let the divine flame upon the altar of the heart die away in ashes.

It was both a pleasure and a privilege to meet face to face the company of Semitic scholars, from every part of the world, who assembled at Stockholm, Sept. 2d, in attendance upon the Eighth International Congress of Orientalists. It would be difficult to name a university, of any note, which was not represented. A partial list of the names most familiar to Bible students will indicate in some measure the character of the gathering: Dillmann (of Berlin), Schrader (of Berlin), August Müller (of Königsberg), Stade (of Giessen), Hommel (of Munich), Jensen (of Strassbourg), Kautzsch (of Halle), Nestle (of Würtemberg), Brugsch-Pasha (of Berlin), Merx (of Heidel-

berg), Meyer (of Halle), Euting (of Strassbourg), Oppert (of Paris), Halévy (of Paris), Ginsburg (of England), Chas. H. H. Wright (of Dublin), Max Müller (of Oxford), Sayce (of Oxford), Strassmaier (of London), Bensly (of Cambridge).

The object of the meeting was, to be sure, chiefly a scientific one; but the social element was not forgotten. The receptions, dinners and excursions, which made up so large a part of the programme of the Congress, furnished opportunities not only for the private discussion of scientific subjects, but also for the formation of many pleasant acquaintanceships. But the great result of such a gathering is the encouragement and stimulus given both to those who attend it and to the large number who are unable to be present. Contact with such men, even the reading of the proceedings of such work, leads to higher and better work than would otherwise be accomplished. This is the age of Congresses. They are productive of great good. Let their number increase.

THE world owes a debt of gratitude to the man who has contributed even slightly to the common store of knowledge upon any subject. He, too, who has shown conclusively that the world has all along been giving its assent to something, supposed to be true, which is not true, is to be regarded as a public benefactor. Some men by their disposition, their bent of mind, are called upon to do one kind of work, perhaps, constructive, others to do what, for the time, seems to be destructive.

Two dangers must be guarded against; the *first*, that the one engaged in constructive work, build into his structure nothing that will weaken it. The material used should be thoroughly tested. If it contain a flaw, it should be thrown aside. The fact is, we are too prone to accept as true and proven, that for the substantiation of which there does not exist the first syllable of evidence. A theory, even a fact claimed to exist, if vouched for by some one, will, within an incredibly short time be accepted by thousands, who never stop to consider whether there is any foundation for the said theory or fact other than the mere word of a pretended investigator. The investigator having persuaded himself that his discovery is a true one, builds upon

it still other speculations which, in time, become as firmly established in his mind and in the minds of his adherents as was the first. And so it goes on from bad to worse.

The *second* danger lies in another direction: If the man who has shown, at least to his own satisfaction, that a certain supposed fact does not exist, that a certain commonly accepted system is entirely false,—does this, and does nothing more, surely he has made a mistake. There are times when it is necessary to startle men, in order that they may be aroused from a state of lethargy. But in ordinary cases, it is better to proceed slowly, to take away only as fast as that which has been removed is again built up. Especially should this plan be followed if there is some reason to suppose that perhaps, after all, that which is destroyed is more vital, and more valuable than the substitute which is offered for it. To put our thought in other words, let us be slow to accept “the new” whether it is (1) of a very pleasing nature, fitting in admirably with our tastes and desires (a thing which in itself should make us suspicious of it), or (2) of a hostile character, foreign and injurious to what we hold dear, and requiring the rejection of this if we should accept it. A true and honest conservatism is the need of the hour.